

Merritt Island Hunt Impoundment Conditions

November 1, 2015

After an abundance of rain last year, the refuge impoundments ended the 2014-2015 waterfowl season in excellent condition. While much of Florida received excessive amounts of rain throughout 2015, along the coast rainfall was scarce in the spring and summer. Unfortunately, lack of rain and high lagoon levels in the Fall raised the salinity in many of the impoundments above our target levels. Despite the current high salinity, low salinity during summer allowed for the growth of abundant submerged aquatic vegetation. Water levels in all the impoundments are currently at our target and should provide easy access for hunters.

The following is a brief summary of habitat conditions within individual impoundments opened to waterfowl hunting. Water levels and salinity for November 2014 are included for comparison.

- Biolab (T-27A) - Current water level = 1.6, salinity 18 ppt (2.0, 8ppt 11/2014). Biolab did not receive as much rain as other areas of the refuge but it did receive enough to grow some good duck food. It should be a good alternative for those who do not hold a permit for Area 1 or 4.
- Max Hoeck Creek (T-27B) - Current water level = 1.7, salinity 25 ppt (1.9, 12 ppt 11/2014). Salinity in this impoundment is higher than most other impoundments on the refuge but hunters may find interior ponds with low salinity and abundant waterfowl food. Conditions are much better than past years but vehicle access via Biolab spur is closed.
- East Gator Creek (T-24B) - Current water level = 1.7, salinity 20 ppt (2.0, 0 ppt 11/2014). Salinity is currently higher than our target level but there is good growth of widgeon grass in the impoundment.

- Catfish Creek (T-24C) - Current water level = 1.7, salinity 23 ppt (2.0, 0 ppt 11/2014). Salinity is currently higher than our target level but there was good growth of waterfowl food earlier in the season.
- Peacock's Pocket (T-24D) - Current water level = 1.8, salinity 21 ppt (2.1, 0 ppt 11/2014). Salinity is currently higher than our target level but there was good growth of waterfowl food earlier in the season.
- Gator Creek - Current water level = 1.7, salinity 20 ppt (2.0, 0 ppt 10/2014). Salinity is currently higher than our target level but there was good growth of waterfowl food earlier in the season.
- Shiloh 5 - Current water level = 2.1, salinity 1 ppt (1.9, 0 ppt 11/2014). Target salinities and water levels were reached early and food production has been excellent.
- Shiloh 3 - Current water level = 2.0, salinity 3 ppt (1.9, 0 ppt 11/2014). Target salinities and water levels were reached early and food production has been excellent.
- Shiloh 2 - Current water level = 2.0, salinity 6 ppt (1.9, 1 ppt 11/2014). Target salinities and water levels were reached early and food production has been excellent.
- Shiloh 1 - Current water level = 1.8, salinity 10 ppt (1.9, 5 ppt, 11/2014). Salt has been successfully flushed out of the impoundment over the course of the last year. Conditions are not as good as the rest of the Shilohs but this impoundment is in better shape than it has been it quite some time.
- M Pond - Current water level = 1.8, salinity 6 ppt (2.0, 0 ppt 11/2014). Target salinities and water levels were reached early and food production has been good.

- L Pond - Current water level = 1.7, salinity 11 ppt (2.0, 0 ppt 11/2014). Target salinities and water levels were reached early and food production has been good.